

ESTABLISHING A NEW LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS AT HELLA

As a matter of fact, the lessons learned as a significant concept of knowledge management, is not unfamiliar to Hella. The first lessons learned process of the company was established in 2002 to accumulate corporate know-how through transforming individual knowledge and experiences into organizational assets. Despite existing process, the company continues to confront with high amount of customer line returns and non quality expenses caused by repeat failures. Hella strongly believes that the repetition of the same failures, mostly arises from the absence of a well established and effectively utilized lessons learned process and system. Thus, the senior management decided to institutionalize a new lessons learned process so as to promote the repetition of desirable outcomes and preclude the recurrence of unwanted outcomes in future design and development projects.

As there is not specific organizational unit such as lessons learned center or knowledge management center, the board of directors allocated a cross-functional team for new process establishment. The establishment started with process definition. The new lessons learned process is defined as avoiding failures and their repetition by looking at failures beforehand which have occurred in completed projects or similar products and processes. Moreover, it will include five substantial sub-processes such as collecting, evaluation, implementation, distribution, and active research.

One of the primary purposes of the new lessons learned process is to store all captured lessons learned in a central and unique lessons database embedded in Lotus Notes6.5® software. More importantly, it is aimed to ensure immediate incorporation of captured lessons into knowledge management system tools through an established lessons learned workflow. By doing this, the cross-project knowledge transfer will be substantially realized since new projects have to be managed in accordance with updated versions of the knowledge management system tools.

Despite all efforts, the new lessons learned process has several gaps and vulnerabilities that may have negative impacts on its functionality. The author, as a master thesis student, is assigned by the company to make improvement suggestions in order to overcome process vulnerabilities before global rollout in August 2011. The identified vulnerabilities and gaps, as well as improvement suggestions will be discussed with the participants of international research conference 2011.